

government: Do everything you can to make sure there is competition working in our free marketplace. And at that point, he suggested a bipartisan bill that I have dealing with meatpacking and animal—beef—slaughter. So I told him today that maybe we can work on that piece of legislation, as well, in a bipartisan way.

So I could point out three issues that I have moving with Democrats that could be brought up now. I will bet every one of the 99 Senators in here have bipartisan bills that they could be working on, and we ought to start that process going if we are going to have success for the year of 2022.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, at 5 p.m. today all postcloture time on the Ruiz nomination expire; and that following the confirmation vote, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Puttagunta, Lopez, and Staples nominations in the order listed, without intervening action of debate; further, that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, the confirmation votes be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to notify all Senators that they should expect four rollcall votes beginning at 5 p.m.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is a photograph that we have all seen: six battle-weary victorious marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima. It is one of the most iconic photos of World War II.

It was taken 77 years ago this month. Among those six brave marines was a coal miner's son from western Pennsylvania. His name was Sgt Michael Strank. At 25 years of age, he was the oldest of the six flag raisers. The men in his rifle squad idolized him. One of them said: "He was the kind of Marine you read about, the kind they make movies about."

Sergeant Strank used to tell his men: "Follow me and I'll try to bring you all home safely to your mothers."

One week after he raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi, Michael Strank was killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was the first of the six flag raisers to die.

Today, he is buried among America's heroes in Arlington National Cemetery, but that is not the end of the story.

In 2008, a Marine security guard based at the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia discovered that Michael Strank was not a natural-born U.S. citizen; he had received his citizenship through his fa-

ther when his father became a U.S. citizen in 1935. So where was this marine's marine born? He was the first child born into an ethnic Ukrainian family in what is now Slovakia. Like my own mother, who was born in Lithuania, Michael Strank came to America with his mother as a toddler, as soon as his father could save the money for their passage.

Those who were there that day on Iwo Jima will remember that a loud cheer went up from thousands of marines when they saw, finally, that red, white, and blue of the U.S. flag flying over the highest peak on that island. They knew that that day, in the war between freedom and tyranny, freedom had won.

Today, almost 80 years later, the battle between freedom and tyranny continues, and one of its new flash points is Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have made it clear: They want to be free and independent. They want to chart their own future. They want to choose their own leaders through elections that they conduct.

This is the future that more than 92 percent of Ukrainians chose in a referendum in 1991, after Ukraine declared its independence from the crumbling and corrupt Soviet Union, but Russian President Vladimir Putin—the old KGB agent—refuses to acknowledge Ukraine's right to exist, its right to independence, and its right to self-determination.

For almost 100 days, from November 2013 to January 2014, the Ukrainian people waged a "Revolution of Dignity" to force from office a corrupt, Russian-backed, puppet President—and they won. In retaliation, Russia invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula and parts of eastern Ukraine and installed a Russian-friendly government. This forceful occupation of parts of Ukraine by Russia marked the first time, the first time since World War II ended, that one nation had redrawn the map of Europe by force.

For the last 8 years, Russia has tried relentlessly to destabilize the democratically elected Government in Ukraine. This is part of the reason that President Trump's efforts to withhold congressionally approved military aid for Ukraine in order to extract political favors was egregious. Now, Putin has amassed more than 120,000 Russian soldiers on the borders of Ukraine. Whether Putin is driven by megalomaniacal delusions of restoring the Soviet Union or is simply seeking to create chaos and sow dissension among NATO allies is unclear, but here is what is clear: A Russian invasion of Ukraine would constitute a grave assault not only on Ukraine, but on the institutions and agreements that have kept peace in Europe for almost 75 years.

A Russian invasion of Ukraine also could be seen as a danger to our NATO allies in Poland and in the courageous young Baltic democracies in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It would be a cat-

astrophic mistake on Putin's part, and President Biden has made that point over and over.

Chicago is home to one of the largest Polish communities outside of Warsaw, the largest Lithuanian community outside of Vilnius, and one of the largest Ukrainian communities outside of Kyiv. More than 46,000 Ukrainian Americans live in the Chicago area, the third largest Ukrainian community in the United States.

A week ago, I attended a celebration at the Cultural Center in Chicago, on Chicago Avenue in Ukrainian Village. Also speaking at that gathering was Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States. I can tell you, the Polish and Lithuanian communities in Chicago were there standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine—and with the people of Poland, Lithuania, and the Baltic to decide their own futures.

Vladimir Putin and his henchmen should know that the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies also believe that it is the right exclusively of Ukraine and other young democracies to protect their territorial boundaries and decide their own fate. The United States made its position clear yesterday in the U.N. Security Council. Ukraine, the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies all want a diplomatic solution to Russia's threats on Ukraine. That is what we seek. If Vladimir Putin wants to avoid a debacle that will cost his nation dearly in lives and treasure, he will agree to this solution.

I commend President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their teams for their strong support of Ukrainian independence and against Russian aggression. The Biden administration has provided significant military equipment for our Ukrainian friends to ensure that President Putin knows the price that a further invasion will cost. The administration has also bolstered the defense capabilities of our NATO partners in Poland and the Baltics. And if Putin is counting on partisan division in the Senate to weaken America's resolve to defend Ukraine and its neighbors, he is mistaken.

Yesterday, Senator GRASSLEY and I introduced a bipartisan resolution celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Baltic States and reaffirming our close relationship with these young democracies. Later this week, Senator SHAHEEN and I and several of our colleagues, from both parties, will meet with the Baltic and Polish Ambassadors to reaffirm U.S. support for their nations.

I hope that we will also see strong, bipartisan support for legislation that is being drafted by Senators MENENDEZ and RISCH, the chair and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That bill will impose severe, crippling economic sanctions on